

Section I

Introduction



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Seventy-six years ago on November 15, 1927, the Bureau of Forestry was created. Since then, 3,153 acres have been acquired on thirteen lots in four Erie County Southtowns including Boston, Holland, Sardinia and Concord. Lot sizes range from 71 to 852 acre parcels. This acreage is an estimate, and accurate surveys are necessary to determine actual Forest Lot sizes. Most acreage was purchased between 1928 and 1938. Since much of the land came in the form of abandoned farmland, 7.5 million trees were planted in non-forested areas of these lots by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) program during that period. High-density plantings of conifer seedlings were then targeted to provide future economic benefits to Erie County residents.

Due to the natural regeneration process, Erie County forests are now approximately 45% hardwoods and 49% conifers with the remaining acreage in wetlands or field/shrub cover types. This combination gives the County forests high value with regard to both hardwood and softwood timber potential as well as the benefits of recreation, wildlife, education and watershed protection.



Earth Spirit crew and Department of Environmental Conservation Forester conducting a Forest Lot assessment.

In 1965, the USDA Soil Conservation Service (now the Natural Resources Conservation Service) prepared a comprehensive study on growth rates in the Erie County forests. At that time, data were collected and maps were generated that show field lines, fire lanes and property boundary lines. The reports also recommended that pre-commercial thinning take place as soon as possible. The thinning was not performed, and as a result, slow tree growth rates and heavy fuel accumulations are the current conditions, characteristic of an unmanaged forest. The residents of Erie County should now expect healthier and sustainable forests with the creative, innovative and economically beneficial 2003 Erie County Forest Management Plan.